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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on curriculum praxis, or the reflective transaction of curriculum decisions one makes and acts upon, and from which value judgements may be located, clarified, and inferred. The major topic is how values and value judgements relate to curriculum praxis and how they relate to other curriculum decision-making systems. A first model demonstrates that reflective transaction is made in terms of a set of ideas, beliefs, and concepts which are part of our explicit knowledge framework. This is contrasted to two other models which see values as rationally known entities which can be utilized as a part of an overall decision-making process. The author proposes that value judgements may be rationally known but that the underlying values can only be known through reflective transaction. It is suggested that one way of locating areas within which decisions are made that reflect the values we hold is to look at fundamental human interests and basic curriculum referents. A grid created for this purpose locates value positions and serves as a basis for clarifying values. A final comment proposes to think of values that are attached to planning outcomes in order to clarify value judgments and to reach the value base which underlies and pervades praxis. (Author/KSM)

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A Radical Conception of the Role of Values In Curriculum: Praxis *

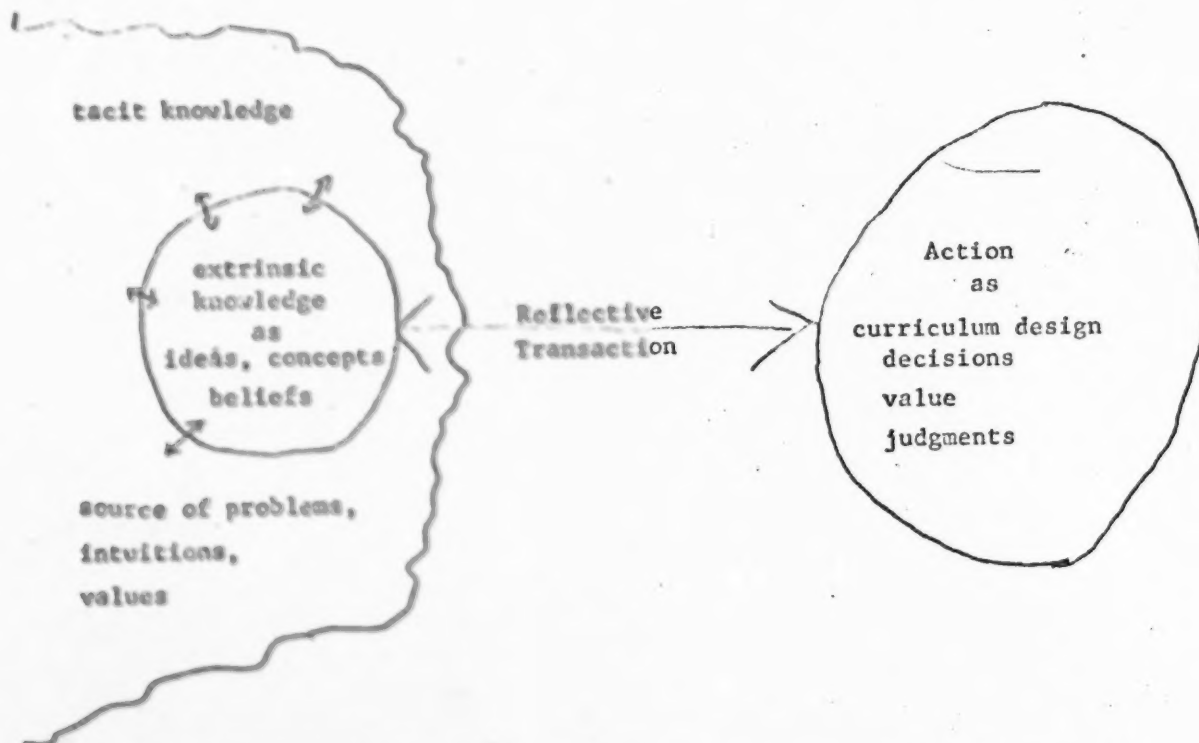
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The focal point for this discussion is upon curriculum praxis. That is, the reflective transaction of the curriculum decisions we make and act upon, from which value judgments may be located, identified, clarified, and from which values may be inferred. Thus, curriculum praxis is defined for our purposes as action with reflection.

We believe the concept of praxis to be valuable, especially when used as Paulo Freire does to mean reflective transaction, in distinction from either reflection without action (intellectualism) or action without reflection (activism). Activism (or mindlessness), would seem to characterize much of the traditional curriculum patterns. Intellectualism (or "ivory towerism") appears to have produced much of the traditional curriculum theorizing.

Let us look at how values and how value judgments relate to curriculum praxis (as defined in this paper) and how values and value judgments relate to other curriculum decision-making systems.

FIGURE I
Curriculum Praxis



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What figure I says in effect is that reflective transaction (actions as reflected upon decisions) are made in terms of a set of ideas, concepts, beliefs which are part of our explicit knowledge framework (e.g. self-realization). Beliefs may be stated, and further, may be justified with other explicit knowledge, but the concept of curriculum praxis assumes that explicitly stated and supported beliefs depend upon our tacit knowledge (intuitions, attitudes, values, perceptual sets, etc.) for its completion and its grounding. It is in the realm of tacit knowledge that one provides for harmony and balance for decisions. President Elliott of Harvard University may have had this notion in mind when he said, "Don't tell me what you believe, tell me what you take for granted." Or, Saint Augustine: "I believe, in order that I may know." It is in this realm that whatever we call values must lie.

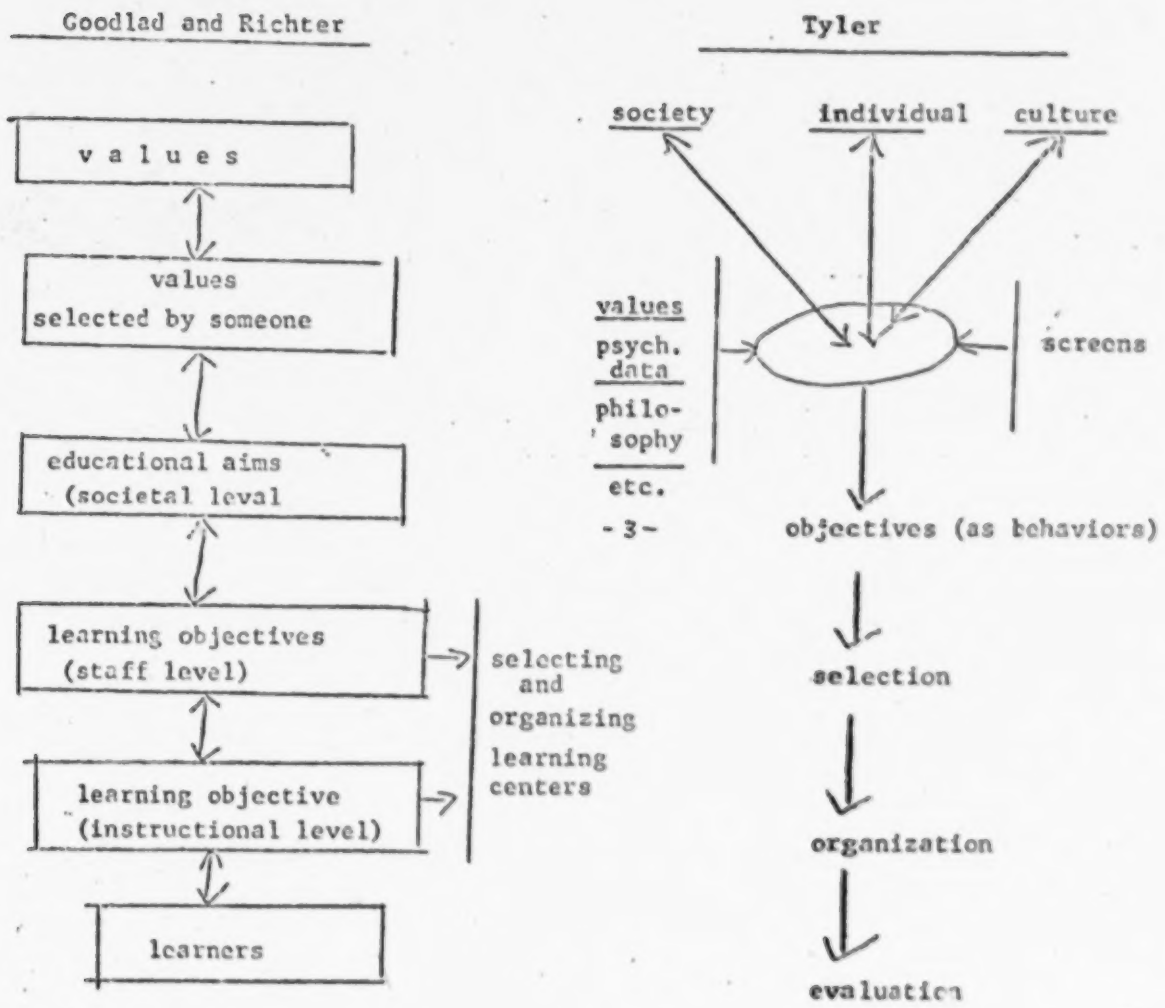
Thus, tacit knowledge (as value for example) may give us the commitment which allows us to act on our beliefs and reflect on our beliefs. Our values, as non-explicit, but tacit knowledge are not directly known and can only be inferred through the process of examining the beliefs and reflected actions we take.

This says nothing about the ultimate source of values. This does suggest how they appear in the existence of persons engaged in praxis. Thus, the realm called tacit knowledge could be the avenue through which "God" is known and enters human beings; or it could be what is called the source of our collective consciousness; or it could be the source of our creative ideas and insights; and where our early personality and temperament patterns reside. It could, of course, be all of these things and much more.

This remains speculative in the rational or explicit sense of knowledge. The source of values is not accessible through logical or empirical means by the model used here. It is accessible only through our praxis. Thus, our values remain hypothetical (in a rational sense), only explicitly known (through inference) by reference to our beliefs and actions.

Let us contrast this position with the Goodlad and Richter and with the Tyler models for curriculum decision-making. In both cases values are implied to be known and stateable in rational terms. (In Goodlad's model as prior guides to decision-making, and in Tyler's model as criteria or screens for sorting out data from curricular referents for goal definition.)

FIGURE II
Goodlad and Tyler Schemes for Relating Values and Curriculum



Thus in Figure II it is apparent that both models see values as rationally known and perceivable entities which can be rationally utilized as a part of an overall decision-making process. This is in contrast to what is proposed here which is an attempt to support a radically different conception and role for values in curriculum decision-making. We believe that value judgments may be rationally known but that underlying values can be known only through reflective transaction in praxis.

The commonly held assumption that values can be rationally selected, justified, stated, then translated to decision, action and usually evaluation is indefensible and probably dangerous. For example, where does one find a source of values? We believe that there is no rational system which is satisfactory.

It seems that one is left with the problem of choosing sets of values from among those suggested by one's favorite axiologist, whether he be a ontologist, humanist, or naturalist; or from an individual or group authority source. To whom do we turn for values? It seems clear that proposals which treat values as rational entities take an elitist posture. It would further appear that acceptance of a belief that values can be stated and acted upon in curriculum clearly implies that decisions will be "ends-means," (all decisions and other actions would be consistent with "stated values"), linear sequences of decisions, and to the extent that the system is honored by decision-makers, it will lead to predictability, control, and conformity.

What is needed at this point is a way to locate areas within which decisions are made which reflect the values we hold. It is suggested here that one possible way of doing this is to look at fundamental human interests and basic curriculum referents.

Jurgen Habermas (Knowledge and Human Interests) sets forth the basic proposition that knowledge cannot be divorced from human interest.

Fundamental to the whole argument here is the assertion that all knowledge is grounded in human interest. This interest may be fundamental self-preservation, but even self-preservation cannot be defined independently of the cultural condition of work, language and power. Thus, self-preservation becomes preservation of whatever fantasy of the "good life" one holds. Thus, the morality of human interest enters as a meaning structure which knowledge serves and which is nicely caught by Bertrand Russell's comment "without civic morality communities perish, without personal morality their survival has no value." In either case knowledge is at the service of our interests.

There are then, if Habermas' analysis is valid, three fundamental cognitive human interests that are the ground for knowledge. There are 1) a technical cognitive interest in control underlying the empirical-analytic approach; 2) a practical cognitive interest in consensus underlying the hermeneutic-historical approach; and, 3) a critical cognitive interest in emancipation or liberation underlying the self-reflective approach.

Basic referents refer to those areas of human culture, society and personality that make up what we know as human life. I refer here to the basic referents as 1) social roles, 2) cultural data, and 3) personal growth. These serve as guides for directing decision making in terms of the expression of goal and value directions.

When we combine human interests and basic goal referents (as in Figure 3) a grid is created which helps locate value positions and can serve as a basis for locating and clarifying our values.

FIGURE III
Grid for locating and clarifying curriculum values

		R E F E R E N T S		
		Social roles	Cultural data	Personal Growth
Interests	Control	Pure type Vocational performance	(Behavioral objectives)	Develop- mental Processes)
	Gonsensus	Traditional teacher education patterns	Pure type (traditional subjects)	
	Liberation	Social reconstr- ution Core	Liberal Arts and General Studies	Pure type (person centered)

Figure three represents a simple two dimensional cross grid of basic curriculum referents with basic human interests. The shaded areas are "pure types" of curricular proposals. Thus the social role-control type can be associated especially with the Bobbit and Charters, vocational training and much professional education. Consensus-cultural data programs are very close to what we feel are traditional schools. The focus is upon subject matter and primarily for its own sake in the sense of sharing a common set of ideas, attitudes, etc. The liberation-personal growth type is readily recognized as what has variously been called child-centered (some variations thereof), emerging needs, etc.

This, of course, does not exhaust the possibilities of this simple grid. It seems obvious that behavioral objectives (in their predominant use) are control oriented and deal primarily with cultural bits within the disciplines. The process or developmental data by and large is also interested basically in control, but in relation to individual growth.

There appear to be social role oriented consensus models as reflected in traditional teacher education programs. However, the liberation interest has fostered social role (problem) oriented designs in the Core Curriculum and other social reconstruction proposals as well as liberal arts and general studies (civilization, etc.) in relation to cultural data.

The important thing to note about this grid is not its rational power for using values (i.e. constructing value patterns) but its hueristic use for locating, expressing and clarifying value judgments and thereby inferring values.

One final comment can be made in terms of frameworks for revealing value questions in curriculum. This is, the kinds of curriculum decisions that appear to be made (at least after the fact). Thus, it may prove useful to think of what values are attached in any of the Figure 3 cells to such planning outcomes as:

- 1) Significance (what is included and excluded as a valid concern in any given area)
- 2) Emphasis (what is given more and less time in the plans, e.g. science, art?)
- 3) Organization (the way time, space, resources and persons are patterned)
- 4) Integration (what way or ways are aspects of programs seen as related to each other?)
- 5) Decision Making (who makes what decisions in what circumstances at what time?)

These kinds of decisions may be said to represent curriculum praxis in the sense that actions (as decisions) reflected upon and justified by explicit knowledge result in value judgments about the five decision areas above (and others).

We suggest that it may be useful to examine the cells of figure three in terms of the quality of value judgments that arise in curriculum praxis. This may be done by looking at each cell in terms of the five selected (or others) decisions which appear to at least partially describe curriculum praxis.

Then as value judgments become clear and can be specified we may have a chance to get at the value base which underlies and pervades praxis.

Postscript

As we look at what we have said it occurs to us that the basic distinction we are making about how values enter into curriculum has interesting implication for the problem of values itself.

Thus, the rational view of values assumed in the Goodlad and Tyler models would lead inevitably to control of organizational structure. Bureaucracy is the predictable organizational structure and linear design the predictable program characteristic.

On the other hand, if one takes a view of values which is similar to the one proposed here it is suggested that the kinds of value judgments that will be made will be more apt to reflect the liberating and personal growth dimensions. Thus, whether a value rationale is a value judgment (or set of) or not is an intriguing problem. .